

Sunday, July 22, 2001 1C

# Jenkins' house lets history in

Folks bring photos, documents relating to family as kids try hand at gardening

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LESAGE — Jeff Clagg's callused hands took Bloody Butcher and Reids Yellow Dent corn cobs out of a five-gallon bucket. Words quickly followed about the corn and other vegetables.

Clagg, a re-enactor with the 36th Virginia Infantry, stood under a shade tree in the side yard of the Jenkins Plantation House on Saturday afternoon escaping the stifling midday heat and talking some gardening. Not modern-day Mantis tiller and Miracle-Gro gardening though, but gardening the way he does it — with heirloom seeds and horse-drawn plows in the old-time way.

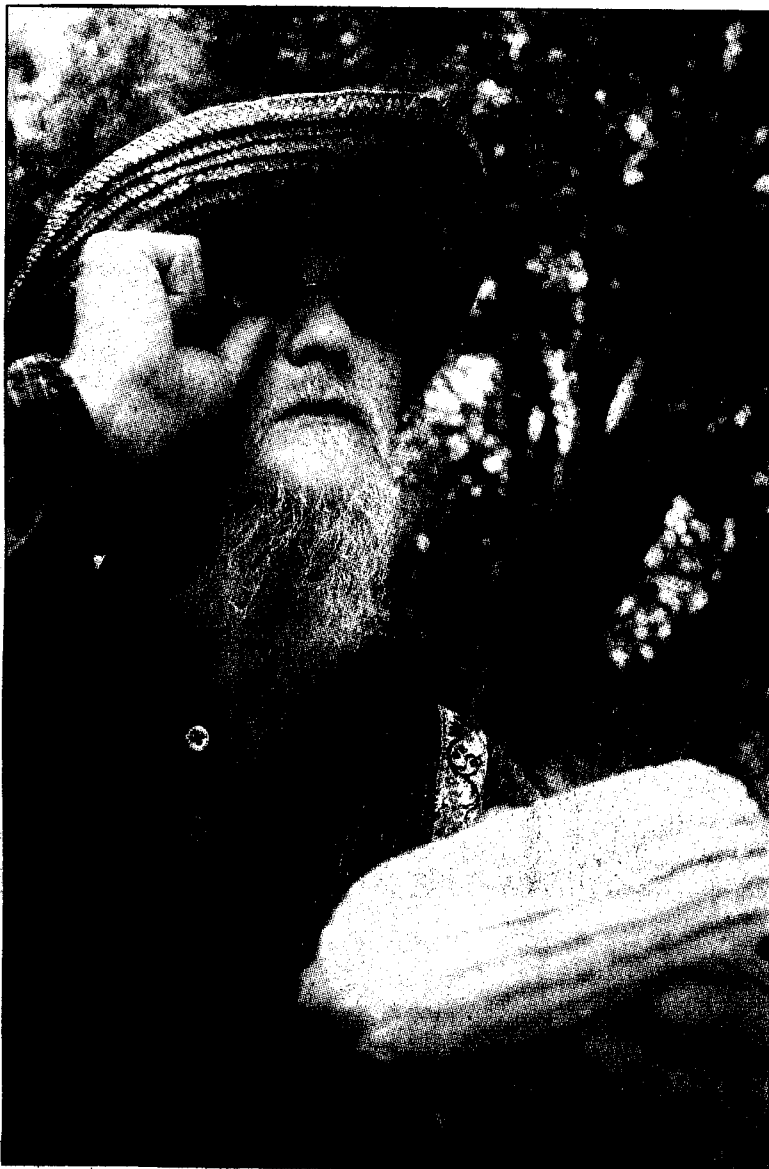
Surrounded by period-true chicken varieties such as Silver Gray Dorkins and Muscogee ducks, Clagg was one of the main attractions at the museum, which had a free Frontier Day on Saturday.

Children could churn butter, learn simple hand-quilting techniques, plant corn and take some corn seed home with them, thanks to the program sponsored by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, which operates the museum.

Clagg, who lives just up the road, didn't have to think long when discoursing on his favorite varieties of Civil War-era seeds — the type that would have been grown on the grounds of this historic plantation that once spanned 4,000 acres and on which still stands the historic mansion completed in 1835 by Virginia merchant William Jenkins.

"My wife and I grow everything in our garden pre-1863," said Clagg, rattling off a long list of rare vegetables from bull-nose peppers and cheese-wheel pumpkins to soldier beans.

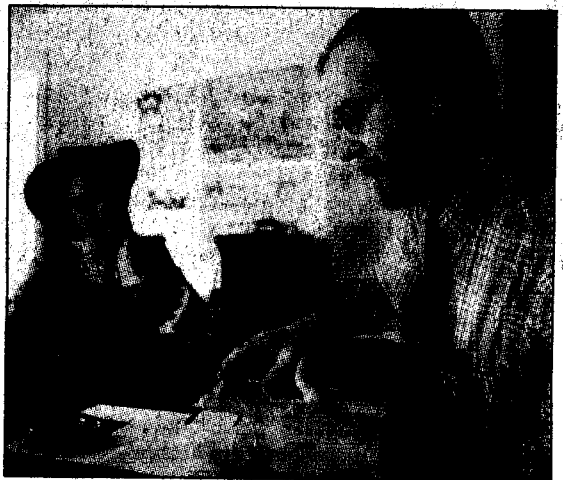
Frontier Day coincided with an open house at the museum hosted by the Division of Culture and History in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which owns the plantation property included in the



**ABOVE:** Jeff Clagg of Lesage takes a close look at some of the heirloom corn he took Saturday to the Jenkins Plantation Museum during a free Frontier Day. Clagg, a Civil War re-enactor, plants heirloom crops that are period-true to the Civil War era.

**RIGHT:** Clara Knight of Milton, who took some historical documents she has collected about the Jenkins Plantation Museum there Saturday, talks with Fredrick Armstrong, director of the Archives and History Section of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

Toril Lavender/The Herald-Dispatch



Corps' Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area.

The purpose of the open house was to encourage folks to bring photographs or documents relating to the Jenkins family, the original house and plantation and the history of the surrounding community.

The house and plantation are

historically significant because Jenkins' son, Albert Gallatin, an attorney, inherited the home and grounds. Albert was a U.S. congressman at the time of the Civil War, but resigned to take a commission in the Confederate Army.

Jenkins, who became a Confederate brigadier general, led

the 8th Virginia Calvary on such raids as Guyandotte in 1861. He died in 1864 from wounds suffered in the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain near Dublin, Va.

Historians didn't have to ask Clara Knight anything twice.

## If you go

The Jenkins Plantation House Museum, 8814 Ohio River Road, Lesage, is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. Call (304) 762-1059. The museum is located 15 miles north of Huntington on Ohio River Road (West Virginia 2). Upcoming events sponsored by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History at Jenkins include: Aug. 21 — "A Bird's Life;" and Sept. 22 — "Homestead Gathering," a day of games and music to celebrate the 166th birthday of the plantation. For a complete history of the home or if you have information, photos or other documents about the history of the Jenkins Plantation, contact the West Virginia Division of Culture and History through its Web site at <http://www.wyculture.org>.

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# Jenkins

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Knight, who now lives in Milton, is perhaps one of the most important living ties to the plantation, because the self-described history buff lived there from the late 1960s until January of 1989 when the Corps bought the house and land.

Dressed in a beautiful pink lace-filled period dress, Knight brought over many documents, photographs, newspaper stories and even the period dining room set, which will be displayed in the house.

"We love history and try to preserve it," Knight said. "I'm Union and this is a Confederate house. But the general (Jenkins) saved my grandma's house. So I felt like I owed a debt."

Knight helped get the home placed on the National Register of Historic Places, a designation that occurred on May 22, 1978.

Folks from the state and the Corps photographed copies of Knight's materials to give them a better idea of what was on the grounds. Wayne Budrus of the Corps of Engineers said that information will be used to make the planned restoration of the plantation as historically accurate as possible.

One document Knight brought, dated March 17, 1862, was a bit warm to the touch.

The original document — several folded pieces of brown paper — showed that Jenkins had leased the farm to his father-in-law in Missouri during the Civil War.

Fredrick Armstrong, director of Archives and History section for the Division of Culture and History, said the now-deceased lawyer who gave the document to Knight probably should not have had the original copy.

"I am sure he 'extracted' it from the Cabell County Courthouse," Armstrong said. "But it is in good hands."